

FLORIDA BLUEBERRIES

MARKETING FLORIDA'S FAVORITE SUPER FRUIT



Research from the UF/IFAS Center for Public Issues Education in Agriculture and Natural Resources shows that national consumers favor Florida blueberries but are unaware of when the blueberries are available.

CRAVING MORE INFORMATION?

Learn about consumers' perceptions of Florida blueberries and how you can better market your crop.

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AWARENESS OF PERCEPTIONS COULD IMPROVE BLUEBERRY MARKETING

The Florida blueberry industry is valued at more than \$47 million and ranks seventh in the nation. However, global competition and a short harvest window continually threaten the industry's sustainability.

In 2015, the UF/IFAS Center for Public Issues Education surveyed U.S. residents who lived in states that received Florida blueberries to explore consumers' perceptions and barriers to purchasing Florida blueberries. Results from the study can help producers and distributors better market blueberries on a national scale.

Research revealed that only 16 percent of consumers believed that they could correctly identify when Florida blueberries were in season. However, when that 16 percent of consumers were asked what months they thought Florida blueberries were in season, many consumers incorrectly believed blueberries were available over the summer months, instead of spring. Between 10 and 15 percent of consumers believed that Florida blueberries were in season between October and February.

For the most part, consumers seemed aware of the health benefits of eating blueberries: strengthened eyesight, improved memory and more. A large majority also knew that blueberries both lower the risk of cancer and help prevent heart disease. More than half, however, incorrectly believed that blueberries help soothe achy joints.



STRENGTHEN
EYESIGHT



IMPROVE
MEMORY



LOWER RISK OF
CANCER



PREVENT HEART
DISEASE

**CONSUMERS SEEM AWARE OF HEALTH BENEFITS SUCH AS
STRENGTHENED EYESIGHT, IMPROVED MEMORY, LOWER RISK OF
CANCER, AND PREVENTION OF HEART DISEASE.**



Consumers also had opinions about what size packages they prefer to buy. The majority of consumers identified a pint container as the ideal amount of blueberries to purchase. About a quarter of consumers said a 2-pound package was ideal, compared to 16 percent who said 6 ounces was preferred.

MOST CONSUMERS PREFER TO BUY BLUEBERRIES PACKAGED IN PINT CONTAINERS.



* 8% SELECTED 'OTHER' OR 'MAKES NO DIFFERENCE'

Researchers with the PIE Center put together the following tips to better market Florida blueberries to consumers and answer some of the misconceptions that consumers have about the Florida blueberry industry, such as the growing season.

MARKETING TACTICS

- 1** Implement a digital campaign through the internet, including websites and social media.
- 2** Utilize the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services Fresh from Florida program to drive consumer awareness and demand for Florida blueberries.
- 3** Encourage retailers to feature in-season Florida blueberries in their weekly ads, accompanied by the Fresh from Florida logo.
- 4** Promote the Florida blueberry season to produce retailers through informative articles and advertising in retail publications.
- 5** Purchase advertisements or pitch story ideas to popular consumer magazines.
- 6** Engage with customers year-round on social media, especially close to and during the Florida season to further promote the Florida blueberry industry as well as your business.
- 7** Consider getting involved in and promoting blueberry-related agritourism activities, such as U-pick operations which allow consumers to gain personal experiences with the blueberry industry.

ABOUT OUR RESEARCH

The PIE Center partnered with the Florida Specialty Crop Foundation to explore consumers' perceptions and barriers to purchasing Florida blueberries. PIE Center researchers surveyed 2,100 U.S. residents at least 18 years old who lived in states that received Florida blueberries. The research is funded through a specialty crop block grant administered by the USDA and Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.

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